

ART AND SCIENCE
IN THE SPANISH BAROQUE
Natural History, Collecting
and Visual Culture

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2. Adriaen van Stalbeem, *The Sciences and the Arts*, ca. 1650.
Oil on panel, 89.9 × 117 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

spirit of erudition and curiosity of the Renaissance *Kunst- und Wunderkammern*, these works were a celebration of the cultivated taste for painting, as well as a claim, on the symbolic level, of the intellectual character of art.⁴

The Sciences and the Arts would be related to the first gallery paintings, produced by artists such as Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625), Frans Francken the Younger (1581–1642) and Hieronymus Francken the Younger (1578–1623) between the 1610s and the 1640s.⁵ These works show spacious rooms profusely decorated with paintings, statues, antiquities and various *naturalia* and *artificialia*. They generally represent imaginary individuals and collections situated within a fictional gallery or cabinet. But whether they correspond to historical persons or not, the art-lovers in these paintings attract attention for their grand manner as they contemplate a painting or discuss a coral. These paintings reflect the aspirations of a large group of connoisseurs and collectors, that of the emerging bourgeoisie, including many artists, eager to achieve a new social status associated with erudition and the cultivation of the arts as the hallmark of both material and intellectual wealth.⁶

The form in which material culture is distributed in these galleries varies, although some motifs frequently recur: shelves with small sculptures, vases and antiquities; tables with shells,



7. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Hearing*, 1617–18.
Oil on panel, 64 × 109.5 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.



16. David Teniers the Younger, *The Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Painting Gallery in Brussels*, 1647–51. Oil on copper, 104.8 × 130.4 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

the style of a particular artist, in pictures of collections. For instance, the *Allegory of Sight and Smell* contains several reproductions of actual works – Rubens’s *Mars and Venus*, *The Leopards*, *Bacchanal*, *The Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt*, *Portrait of Charles the Bold*, or the *Portrait of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella Clara Eugenia*⁴¹ – but also fictitious paintings in the style of a specific artist.

The matter of imitation and copying in the two allegories becomes somewhat more complicated if it is assumed that they reproduce two paintings commissioned in 1617 for the Archdukes Albert and Isabella Clara Eugenia that disappeared in the fire of the Coudenberg Palace in Brussels in 1731. In that case they would be not an example of collaboration between Brueghel and Rubens, in spite of the claims made in the 1636 inventory, but a replica of those lost originals, painted by Brueghel in collaboration with Gerard Seghers (1591–1651), Frans Francken the Younger, Hendrick van Balen (1573–1632) and Joos de Momper (1564–1635).⁴² So what seemed to be a micro-collection of works by Rubens, possibly involving the artist himself, acquires the new status of a miniature copy of that collection – yet another layer in the complex superimposition of textures displayed by these paintings full of paintings.

The display of these pictures of collections alongside works by artists who had been imitated in the painting or had themselves taken part in the production of copies can be regarded as the perfect expression of an illusory continuity: that between the room that housed these artworks, the space

of Wales in Madrid was eager to acquire at any cost.⁶⁶ The correspondence concerning these codices provides further information about Espina. Thus, in a letter dated 2 November 1629, sent by Francis Cottington, English ambassador in Madrid at the time, reference is made to the collector's popularity: "the booke of drawings of Leonardo de Vinze wich is in Don Juan de Espinas hands, whoe everie man at Madrid knowes, and Vizente Juarez best, whoe is the wenches father that sings soe well".⁶⁷ Thanks to another letter sent to the Earl of Arundel, dated 7 August 1631, we know that Espina left Madrid by order of the Inquisition. This would explain his stay of several years in Seville and would, in some measure, account for the tone of the *memorial* he sent to the king from there.⁶⁸

According to the letter by Father Sebastián González, Espina's style of collecting and the kind of intellectual activity in which he engaged were also viewed with disfavour: he was accused of overspending and an erudition marred by adulation. This is very different from the picture offered by Quevedo, who wrote:

The reception offered in his house was most learned, his conversation most accurate, his activities most honest and such that he profited from the time that is wasted on other pursuits, spending the day without counting its progress. We can say that there alone the entertainment was blameless and the recreation innocent.⁶⁹

Finally, the allusions to the enchanted house and the lack of servants – we shall see that Espina was believed to make use of automata of his own devising – bear witness to the air of mystery that surrounded both his person and his collection. As the letter of Father González reminds us, it was an air of mystery that even shrouded the circumstances of his death, his burial and the distribution of his precious possessions:

One day he went to St Martin, one of the parishes in this city, and asked to be given extreme unction, and when permission had been given he asked the priest to perform the sacrament within two hours. They brought it to him; he told them where his will was deposited and died a few hours later. [...] He asked to be buried in his parish, that the grave should be five *varas* wide, and that the gravediggers should be given 400 *reales* for their work, but no more than 100 if it was 3 inches less. That his 24 exquisite musical instruments be given to His Majesty, and the knife and blindfold used to cut the throat of Rodrigo Calderón, and that he should be warned, when holding the knife, to do it on that side and not the other, otherwise it would spell fatal ruin to a great head of Spain. Likewise he left to His Majesty a villa called Angelica, worth more than 30,000 *escudos*, because of

the extremely rich and curious items it contained. There were other gifts to other persons. Most of his possessions, which were many, he left to the poor. He gave instructions for his house to be sold, on condition that the buyer should buy everything in it, and that it be given him on this condition and no other. If he died while dressed, he was to be laid in a coffin without any covering inside or outside. But if he died in bed, they were to lay him in the coffin wrapped in the sheets in which he had passed away. Only four clergy were to be present at his burial with the cross and without any covering. Four of the poor were to carry his body and another four to bear candles. He asked and begged his friends not to accompany him. No mass was to be said in the presence of his corpse, but 2,000 for his soul. He named the Count Duke as the executor of his will, to appoint seven others to execute it.⁷⁰

Let us now turn to the collection itself, to the treasures that Juan de Espina housed in his celebrated Madrid residence. The most detailed information is to be found in two texts by Vicente Carducho. The first was written after a visit to the famous house, at the collector's request, on 10 April 1628, two days before Espina had to leave Madrid for Toledo and Seville. Carducho's textual account was included in the *memorial* that Espina sent to Philip IV from Seville in 1632.⁷¹

According to Carducho, the visit lasted several hours, from noon to eight o'clock, during which his host demonstrated "with his accustomed courtesy and enthusiasm" the best and most admirable part of his collection:

Original models, paintings, drawings, illuminated manuscripts, prints, and all original works in different materials by masters, famous artists, as well as extraordinary and highly precious reliquaries, desks, cabinets, chests and caskets of ebony, ivory and mother-of-pearl of extraordinary manufacture, filled with many curiosities: birds, cameos, cornelian, and many other things made of ivory, wax, bronze, silver, gold and other materials.

Espina also showed him "a large quantity of instruments, pistols, books and many other things", "all excellent and singular". Carducho concluded that he had never seen such a large and exquisite collection before: "One could travel far to see things of such quality and value, as the way in which many of them were made is beyond comprehension".

A few years later, Carducho included a description of the collection of Juan de Espina in his treatise *Diálogos de la Pintura*, published in 1633.⁷² In a part of the book in which Carducho describes the most outstanding collections in the court of Madrid, the conversation between the Master and the Disciple singles out the case of Juan de Espina:

manuscripts deposited in El Escorial, as well as including commentaries and indices of their own making; and since the work was to be profusely illustrated, they commissioned hundreds of woodcuts, mainly based on copies of the original images of Hernández that Recchi had taken to Naples, and to which the Linceans had limited access at an early stage.²⁸ All this explains the diverse corpus of printed materials associated with the Lincean editorial project that appeared from as early as 1613 until the publication of the definitive edition in 1651.

Historia Naturae: A Singular Collection

This is the temporal context in which to place Nieremberg's natural historical work. One key feature differentiates his project from others. In a passage of *Historia naturae*, he claims: «The Royal Library of San Lorenzo in El Escorial contains the works of the learned Francisco Hernández who was sent to the New World by Philip II to investigate its characteristics. I have the autograph work of this author before me».²⁹ In other words, Nieremberg was able to consult directly the manuscript texts by Hernández. Most likely, the autograph manuscript he mentions refers to the drafts preserved by the *protomédico* until his death, which some time thereafter were incorporated into the library of the Colegio Imperial.³⁰ However, there are instances in which Nieremberg refers to the Hernández manuscripts held in the library of El Escorial in a way that seems to suggest that these were the materials he consulted and copied.³¹ We may therefore assume that Nieremberg was familiar both with the drafts preserved in the library of the Colegio Imperial and with the materials deposited at El Escorial. What matters is that, unlike some of the editorial undertakings mentioned above, his work benefited from a more direct and sustained access to the Hernández materials.

It is likely that Nieremberg spent a good part of the second half of the 1620s studying these sources, given his obligations as holder of the chair of Natural History and his publishing ambitions. In fact, his familiarity with the Hernández material is already evident in earlier works such as his *Prolusión a la doctrina y historia natural* (1629) – an edited and abbreviated version of his inaugural lecture in the Reales Estudios of the Colegio Imperial (fig. 26) – and the abovementioned *Curiosa filosofía* and *Oculta filosofía*.³² For example, in discussing the hummingbird – a bird that fascinated Nieremberg as a modern, exotic model of the type of death and resurrection that had been attributed to the



25. Frontispiece of *Rerum medicarum Novae Hispaniae thesaurus*, by Francisco Hernández (Rome, Vitalis Mascardi, 1651, in-fol.). Engraving. Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.

Chapter 4

Natural History, Medical Knowledge and Visual Representation in New Spain: The Illustrations of the Francisco Hernández Expedition

In his history of the monastery and palace of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, published between 1595 and 1605, José de Sigüenza (1544–1606) describes the decoration of one of the rooms in the palace, the *Sala del Mediodía* (Southern Hall), as follows:

This [room] too has many different and important paintings, taken from life [*del natural*] of many things to be seen in our Indies: some of many different kinds of birds, with the true colour of their feathers; others of a variety of large and small animals, although the large ones are reduced in size and most of them are of small dimensions to fit into the spaces intended for them, as we shall see when we come to discuss the library. There are also different ones of reptiles, which are commonly called *sierpes* in Spanish from the Latin word, in particular snakes, vipers, lizards, caimans, frogs, toads and a thousand other creepy-crawlies. In other paintings, in certain designs and perspectives of gardens, vegetable plots, patios and fountains, there is a large variety of plants and herbs with roots, leaves, fruits and flowers in their natural colours; although many of them are artificially placed together simply to create views and appearances, combining some with others, which delight the eye and also deceive it.¹



43 and 44. Coyote and Vizcacha, in *Historia naturae*, by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Antwerp, Officina Plantiniana Balthasar Moreti, 1635, in-fol.). Woodcut; Christoffel Jegher (woodcutter). Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.

note that this chapter features a woodcut image, while other, much more substantial chapters do not include any illustrations. What accounts for this? Who was responsible for such decisions? As we shall see later on, it is most probable that these interventions were made by the book's printer, Balthasar Moretus (1574–1641), Christoph Plantin's (ca. 1520–1589) grandson, who was at the time director

of the Officina Plantiniana in Antwerp. In any case, the strategy followed in producing the five images just described is an interesting one: taking as a starting point a repertoire of well-known prints by Collaert, certain features of a series of animals were reinterpreted to depict other creatures. In some cases, the image of an Old-World animal served as a model for the portrait of its American counterpart. These examples not only illustrate the malleability of images; they also show that the ways of constructing the visual representation of unfamiliar creatures could vary greatly, in response to epistemic interests as well as practical criteria.

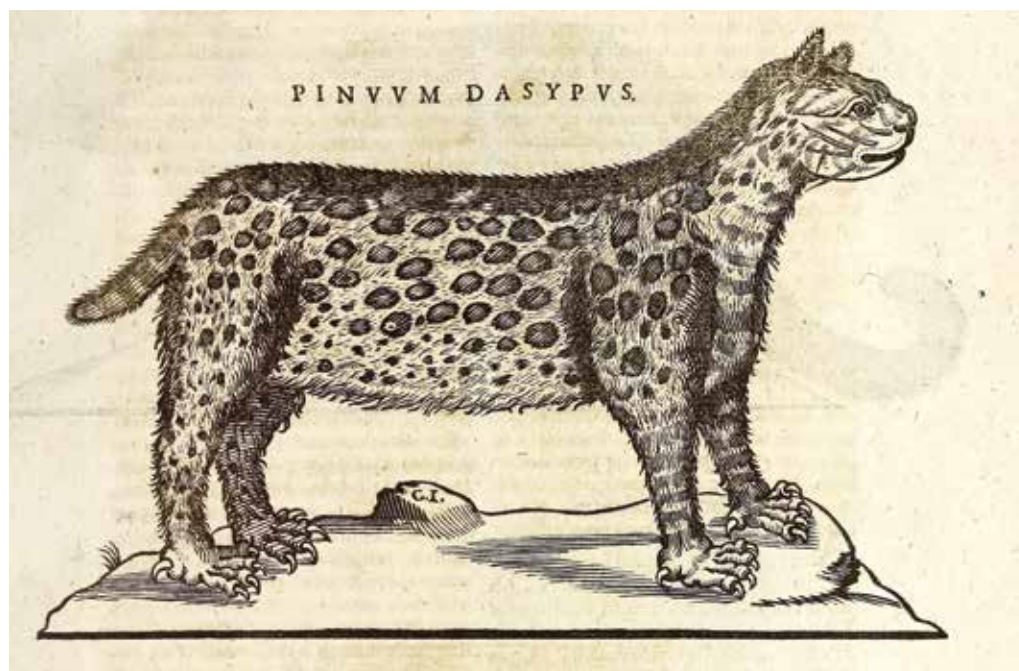
Lastly, among those *Historia naturae* woodcuts modelled after previously published illustrations, I should mention the image of the passionflower, whose iconography and source model will be discussed later in the book.

Adding this set of twenty-three images to the thirty-two printed from the recycled Plantin woodblocks makes fifty-five out of the seventy illustrations featured in *Historia naturae*. The remaining fifteen do not appear to have been based on previous models and therefore constitute “new” images – although any claim on such novelty, in a context where numerous forms of visual culture were in circulation, has to be taken with caution.

Christoffel Jegher and the Art of the Woodcut

Before I discuss these new images in greater detail, let us consider the question of the production of all the *Historia naturae* woodcuts that were not made by reusing the press woodblocks. Twenty-seven of them are signed by the Flemish woodcut artist Christoffel Jegher (1596–1652/1653), who worked for the *Officina Plantiniana* for almost two decades, from 1625 until around 1643.²² Jegher produced a wide range of woodcut images for the Plantin Press, from printer's marks and initial letters to illustrations in treatises on theology and other fields. He is best known for a series of woodcut prints produced in the early 1630s in collaboration with Rubens, another close associate of the press and a good friend of Balthasar Moretus. These elaborate prints (see, for instance, figs 45 and 46), based on Rubens's designs and executed under his close supervision, have been regarded as “the last great woodcuts to be made in the older technique of knife work”.²³

Jegher signed the *Historia naturae* woodcuts with his monogram (“C.I.”). Although there are a number of images in the book that do not feature his signature, close examination of the extant woodblocks, preserved at the Museum Plantin-Moretus, has confirmed that he was responsible for cutting all the blocks



49. *Ocotochtli*, in *Historia naturae*, by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Antwerp, Officina Plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti, 1635, in-fol.). Woodcut; Christoffel Jegher (woodcutter). Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.



51. *Mapach*, in *Historia naturae*, by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Antwerp, Officina Plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti, 1635, in-fol.). Woodcut; Christoffel Jegher (woodcutter). Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.



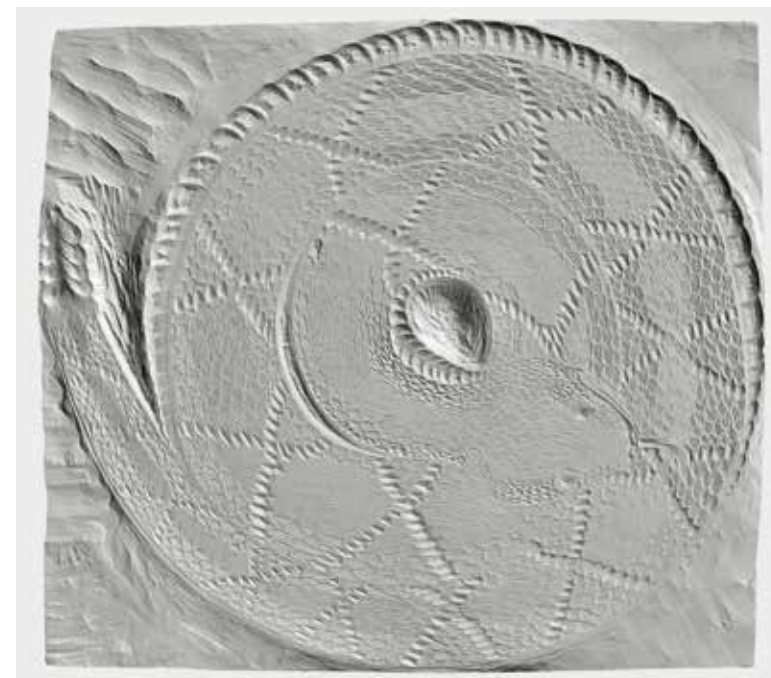
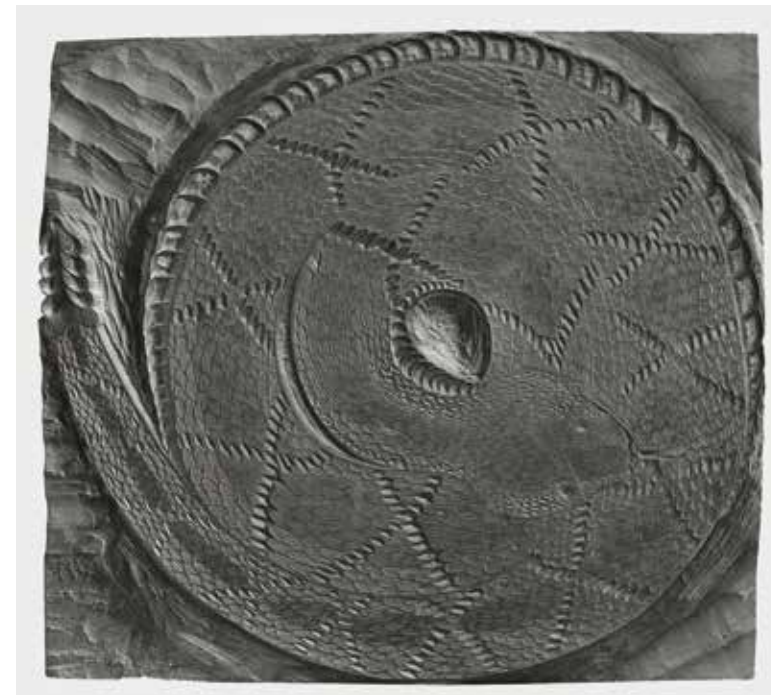
50. *Hoitzlacuatzin*, in *Historia naturae*, by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Antwerp, Officina Plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti, 1635, in-fol.). Woodcut; Christoffel Jegher (woodcutter). Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.

the back or the tail. It is worth noting how the individual incisions made on the block capture the appearance and colour difference of the porcupine's quills. Another example of this kind of technical challenge is the image of the *mapach* or racoon (fig. 51), which sees Jegher engaging with the representation of black and white patterns across the animal's body – except for the human-like hands and feet, which the racoon uses to examine and steal things (hence the association of its name in Nahuatl with the figure of the thief).³⁰

Taking up most of the folio-sized page, the image of the *tlacuatzin* (fig. 52) stands out as one of the most impressive woodcuts featured in *Historia naturae*.³¹ It represents a female opossum and her offspring, which are seen emerging from the pouch. Other features like the *tlacuatzin*'s small head and pointed snout as well as its long and curly fur and its hairless tail – highly valued in Amerindian medical practice – are all effectively rendered by Jegher. The original woodblock has been preserved (fig. 53), together with the other *Historia naturae* blocks cut by the Flemish artist.³² Through the study of these materials, and also thanks to the use of high-resolution scanning and visualisation techniques developed by Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Preservation, we can appreciate the meticulous work carried out by Jegher (fig. 54). Considering



58. *Domina Serpentum, sive Teuhtlacocauhqui*, in *Historia naturæ*, by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Antwerp, Officina Plantiniana Balthasar Moreti, 1635, in-fol.). Woodcut; Christoffel Jegher (woodcutter). Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.



59 and 60. Christoffel Jegher, *Domina serpentum, sive Teuhtlacocauhqui*, Woodblock. Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, inv. no. MPM.HB.03900. Visualisation of relief and colour information (above) and relief information (below) obtained with the Selene PSS scanner © Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Preservation.

Those who paint fish markets, still lifes, animals, fruits and landscapes at this time [...] may be great painters in that genre but do not aspire to higher things, finding pleasure and facility in that comfortable imitation. Hence republics and kings do not make use of them in matters and studies that bring more honour and majesty.³⁴

Representing Nature: The Case of the Passion Flower

As Peter Cherry has argued, although more open and positive than that of Carducho, Pacheco's assessment of still-life painting remains insufficient.³⁵ In the Spanish context, the work of artists like Juan Sánchez Cotán, Juan Fernández "El Labrador" (active in the 1620s and 1630s) or the aforementioned Van der Hamen and Velázquez, among others, clearly defy the reductionist and overintellectual vision expounded Pacheco's *Arte de la Pintura* and Carducho's *Diálogos*. In fact, the degree of sophistication of many paintings is the best proof of how elaborate and complex the apparently trivial imitation of nature could become (fig. 70).³⁶ Furthermore, the many entries relating to these artworks in the inventories compiled in the first half of the seventeenth century reveal the keen interest of collectors in this genre.³⁷

Nature – in the form of still lifes, flower paintings, landscapes, hunting scenes, market scenes – gradually found a niche inside palaces and residences (figs 71 and 72). This virtual presence is of great interest for the history of natural knowledge. To begin with, it was a fictitious, artificial nature, sometimes the result of a precise and faithful process of copying, sometimes the product of an idealised representation, mediated by imagination or caprice. Moreover, this kind of nature was not always based on the natural world. As treatises on painting mention, and as becomes clear from comparison of the motifs in the artworks, many of the images allegedly made "from life" were actually based on previous depictions. Pacheco, for example, recommends the production of studies of animals and birds to serve as models for later compositions, but he also suggests the alternative of resorting to models by other artists, such as Bassano – probably he refers to Jacopo Bassano (ca. 1515–1592) – , who is "so excellent that sometimes it is more reliable to imitate his animals than to represent them from nature".³⁸ This explains the repetition of some *naturalia* in the oeuvre of a single artist – iterations and copies of the same model. This recourse to a "persistent" nature is characteristic of the work of virtually all the still-life painters. A good example is Juan van der Hamen, in whose *bodegones* we can recognise a careful combination of recurrent motifs – thistles, artichokes, grapes, half-open pomegranates – portrayed



70. Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Still Life with Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, ca. 1602. Oil on canvas, 68.9 × 84.46 cm. San Diego, The San Diego Museum of Art.

together with an equally recurrent stock of material objects – plates, pitchers, fruit bowls (fig. 73).³⁹

The imprecision of epithets like "comfortable" (*acomodada*) or "precise" (*puntual*) when applied to this form of imitation reflects the complexity and richness of this kind of representation. Unlike the naturalist's illustrator, subject in theory to discipline and control, the painter of still lifes could tackle the exercise of imitating nature free of any imposition, free above all of the obligation to achieve a perfect match between the object represented and its representation. This freedom did not rule out the potential of certain artworks to show, that is, communicate, aspects of nature that otherwise, because of the lack of direct contact with the object in question, would be inaccessible to their viewers. In other words, the freedom in

Chapter 7

Natural Knowledge, Visual Culture and Preservation in the Early Modern Period

In August 1623, Peter Paul Rubens wrote to his friend Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc of his intention to send him a *perpetuum mobile* instrument based on the one designed by the Dutch inventor Cornelis Drebbel:

Perhaps (although I dare not yet affirm it with certainty) I shall prevail upon my sponsor to have a complete instrument made here, with a case, as if to be kept near me in my private study. If I can obtain this, I shall gladly make you a present of it. Some means will be found to have it reach you safely in Provence, through the aid of certain merchants, provided that you have connections in Marseilles.¹

More than a year later, Rubens confirmed in a letter to Peiresc's brother in Paris, Palamède de Fabri, Sieur de Valavez, that he had sent the instrument to that city, adding:

I believe that it will be well to send the apparatus to Aix in the same way, presuming that it reaches Paris in good condition. In any case will you please remove the cover and lift off the cloth enough to see the glass tube: if that is intact you may be well assured about the rest. There is danger only for the tube; the flask is very solid and strong.²

Rubens predicted a long journey because of the bad roads. He therefore requested Palamède to pay the carrier, Antoine Souris, a generous tip for his care in transporting

The Bird of Paradise in Early Modern European Visual Culture

Like the text, the images of the *manucodiata* in Nieremberg's treatise are derivative. Nevertheless, they are significant when it comes to documenting the recurrent and persistent presence of certain animal and plant representations in early modern natural historical treatises.⁸⁵

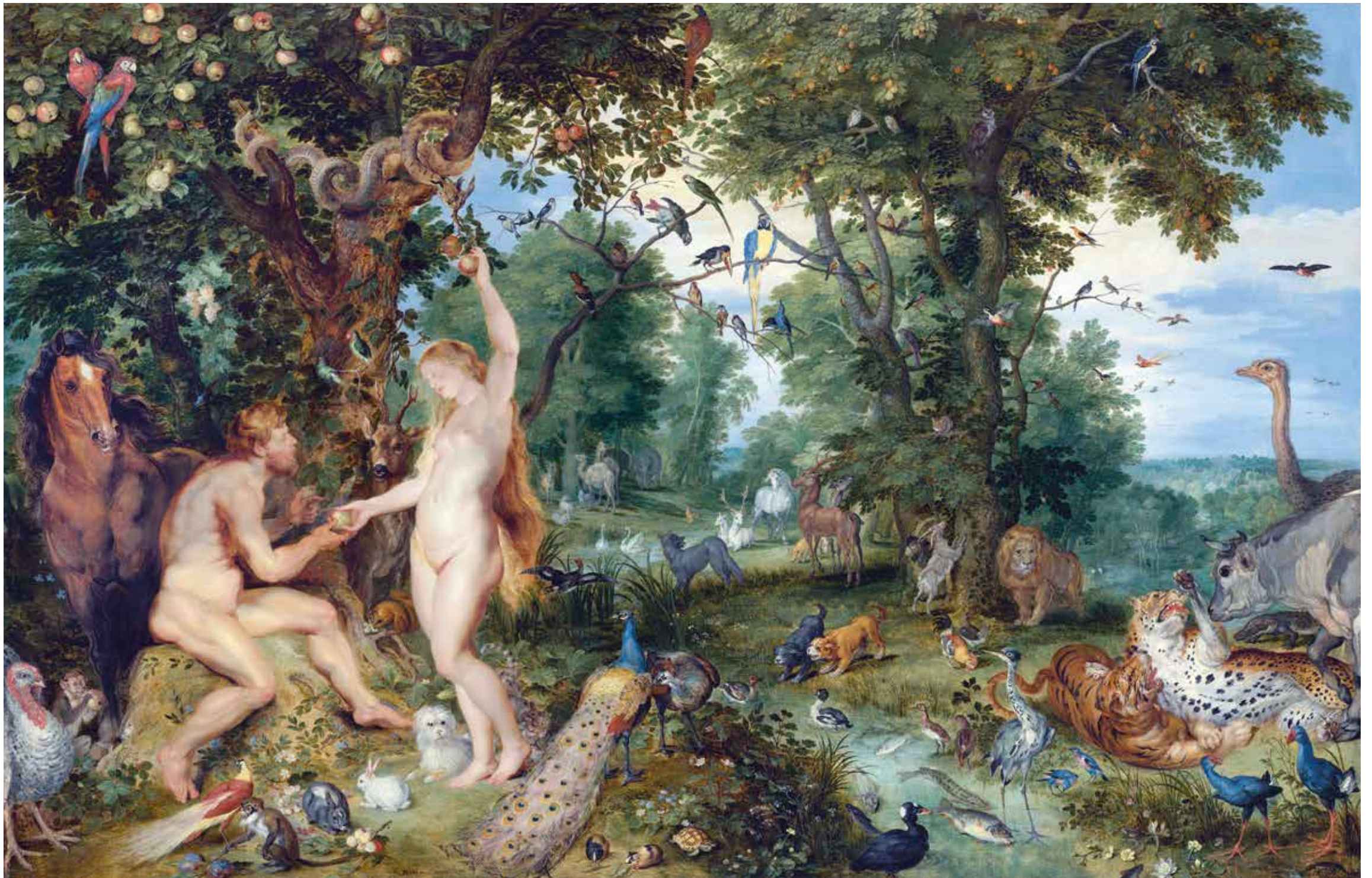
There are three images of the *manucodiata* in *Historia naturae*, a significant number if one takes into account the considerable disproportion between the long list of natural objects described in the text and the number of images that accompany them. The first image (fig. 89) is very similar to the one in the third volume of Gessner's *Historiae animalium* (1555; see fig. 82).⁸⁶ On close inspection, it is clear that Jegher followed Gessner's prototype very closely, both with respect to the general appearance of the bird and the detailed rendition of the delicate texture of its feathers. The extant woodblock bears testimony to the fine craftsmanship required for the production of such precise cuts.⁸⁷ Reproduced in many later works by Gessner himself and by others, the 1555 image remained the canonical representation of this bird for some time. In France it was copied by Pierre Belon, Pierre Boaistuau (1517–1566) and Ambroise Paré (ca. 1510–1590).⁸⁸

Gessner's was not the first depiction of a bird of paradise – in the European cultural context, at least. The earliest known image of this bird produced in Europe is a silverpoint drawing by the German artist Hans Baldung Grien (1484/1485–1545) executed between 1522 and 1525.⁸⁹ To this we can add the early image of a *manucodiata* on the border of a backgammon board signed by Hans Kels the Elder (1480–1559) and dated to 1537; a miniature in the illuminated manuscript *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis*, better known as the *Farnese Hours*, illustrated by the Croatian artist Giulio Clovio (Julije Klović, 1498–1578) between 1539 and 1546; and an embroidered image in the tapestry *The Boat of Venus* after a design by Giulio Romano (1499–1546) from around 1540.⁹⁰ It is also worth highlighting an impressive, printed portrait of the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (1494–1566), produced in Venice around 1540 (fig. 90). This remarkable woodcut image – to which I shall return later – depicts Suleyman wearing an elaborate helmet-crown adorned with pearls, precious stones and a bird-of-paradise aigrette.⁹¹ In the print, one can discern one of the two rear feathers, resembling thick black threads. These feathers are characteristic of many species of bird of paradise – a distinctive feature when it comes to identifying these birds in early modern images.

After mid-century, as more specimens arrived in Europe, the number of images of the bird of paradise increased.⁹² In some cases, the growing circulation



89. *Bird of Paradise*, in *Historia naturae*, by Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Antwerp, Officina Plantiniana Balthasar Moreti, 1635, in-fol.). Woodcut; Christoffel Jegher (woodcutter). Providence, The John Carter Brown Library.



99. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *The Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man*, 1614–17. Oil on panel, 74.3 × 114.7 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis.



112. Juan Fernández “El Labrador”, *Still Life with four Bunches of Grapes*, ca. 1636. Oil on canvas, 45 × 61 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

objects comes under threat: are they real? Did they actually exist in Kalf’s studio? Or are they ideal objects, based on the principles of actual objects yet taking off from those into a space of imaginary perfection?³³

These allusions to matters of ephemerality and inconsistency lead us to the second salient point with regard to *vanitas* painting. It is the effect of alienation produced by works that are concentrated on a very material part of reality and in which the human element seems to have disappeared since, on this scale, all that is human proves insignificant.³⁴ A good example within the oeuvre of Pereda is his *Still Life with Walnuts* from 1634 and today in a private collection.³⁵ But we can also think of the work of some of his contemporaries such as the small-format paintings by Juan Fernández “El Labrador” and Miguel de Pret (1595–1644), based on isolated motifs – flowers, bunches of grapes suspended from strings – represented life-size against a dark background (figs 112 and 113).³⁶



113. Miguel de Pret, *Two Bunches of Grapes with a Fly*, 1630–44. Oil on canvas, 29 × 38 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

In all these cases the artists are juggling with scale. Through its attention to details and textures and its circular shape, Pereda’s painting appears to evoke the effect of a magnifying glass.³⁷ As Cherry has noted, “in these early works, Pereda seems to respond to the botanical naturalism of Flemish and Dutch still-life painting as well as returning to the spirit of scientific investigation that motivated Sánchez Cotán and other early still-life painters in Spain”.³⁸ The visual proximity of Pereda’s walnuts to the skulls featured in the anatomical treatises of the period, or to those reproduced by Pereda himself is obvious. Ultimately, what we observe is the result of a peculiar exercise in dissection, as William Jordan noted.³⁹ Both Fernández “El Labrador” and Pret, on the other hand, reduce the size of their paintings but not the scale of the motifs represented in them, thereby conferring a certain air of deceptive and strange fiction on the reality featured in their works.

In producing a feeling of disquiet or perplexity, these paintings transform such familiar and proximate motifs as walnuts or grapes into remote, surprising,